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Application No. 09/620,177
Amendment Dated 3/30/05
Reply to Office Action of 12/30/04

REMARKS

This Amendment is submitted in response to the Office Action mailed on December 30, 2004. Claims 1, 8, 21, 25 and 31 have been amended and claims 1, 6-8, 10-14, 18-21, 23-25, 27-31 and 33-41 remain in the present application. Applicants' counsel appreciates the courtesy extended by Examiner King during the telephonic interview conducted on March 30, 2005. Applicants have amended each of independent claims 1, 8, 21, 25 and 31 as agreed to during the telephonic interview to clearly define over the prior art of record. In view of the foregoing amendments, as well as the following remarks, Applicants respectfully submit that this application is in complete condition for allowance and request reconsideration of the application in this regard.

As discussed during the telephonic interview, Applicants have amended each of independent claims 1, 8, 21, 25 and 31 to recite that the annular corrugation is located closer to a free end of the sleeve on the first side thereof than a free end of the sleeve on the second side thereof to clearly distinguish over Claes et al. Examiner agreed that in Claes et al., the annular corrugation (10) is positioned around the geometric center of the coupler to define a central stop and, therefore, Claes et al. fails to teach or suggest the annular corrugation as claimed by Applicants. As discussed during the interview, one of ordinary skilled in the art would not be motivated to move the central stop (10) of Claes et al. closer to either end of the coupler since this would destroy the intended purpose and function of the central annular corrugation (10) of

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Claes et al. (see Col. 3, lines 46-52). Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that each of independent claims 1, 8, 21, 25 and 31, and claims depending therefrom, clearly distinguishes over Claes et al. and the rejections of these claims should be withdrawn.

Applicants have also amended each of independent claims 1, 8 and 21 as agreed to during the interview to recite that the bell comprises an elongated tubular bell having an inner wall of substantially constant diameter along a substantial length thereof to clearly distinguish over the Fig. 4 embodiment of Perkins. Applicants respectfully submit that independent claims 1, 8 and 21, and claims depending therefrom, clearly distinguish over Perkins and the rejections of these claims should be withdrawn.

Conclusion

In view of the foregoing response including the amendments and remarks, this application is submitted to be in complete condition for allowance and early notice to this affect is earnestly solicited. If there is any issue that remains which may be resolved by telephone conference, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned in order to resolve the same and expedite the allowance of this application.

Applicants do not believe that this response requires that any fees be submitted, however, if any fees are deemed necessary, these may be charged to Deposit Account No. 23-3000.

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Respectfully submitted,

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